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ABSTRACT

Critical linguistics, an area of study within linguistics that has developed since the 1970s, is discussed. Critical linguistics argues that different groups, societies, and ideologies have different understandings of reality because they classify and categorize with and through language in different ways. Therefore, meaning is not something contained within the words of discourse (that is, literature) but has to be formed within each user of the language. This concept is illustrated in the analysis of a simple English sentence, analyzed as it would be perceived and classified by the reader/"critic." It is proposed that heretofore, linguistic theory has focused too narrowly on understanding the system of language, resulting in too little attention paid to formation of meaning in discourse analysis. The apparent subjectivity of this kind of analysis, criticized by some, is seen as an essential element of understanding. It is argued that this new perspective calls for a reconsideration of language teaching methodology, stressing the connections between linguistic structure and social structure and viewing language as ideology applicable to analysis of all forms of discourse. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

DAVID BIRCH

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

David Birch

The critical study of language is a study not just of the structures of language and texts, but of the people and institutions that shape the various ways language means. In a functional theory of language, analysts are not just interested in *what* language is, but *why* language is; not just in *what* language means, but *how* language means. In the critical linguistics that has developed since the mid-1970s, the assumption is that the relationship between the form and content of texts is not arbitrary or conventional, but that it is determined (and constrained) culturally, socially and ideologically by the power of institutional/discursive formations. The choices and selections that producers of text therefore make from the system of language are principled choices, instituted by social, messy, 'real' worlds of discourse, not by idealised abstract worlds. The structures - the forms - of language do not pre-exist social and cultural processes; they are not encoded in some sort of psychological imprint. The forms, and hence meanings, of language are shaped and determined by institutional forces. Analysis of text, therefore, according to this way of thinking, is analysis of ideologically loaded structures and meanings, not of innocent, arbitrary, random structures. Answering the question of how texts mean therefore answers the question of how institutions mean. This is therefore analysis of language which is concerned with discourse as process, not with language as idealised product.

The critic and theorist Paul Ricoeur, amongst others, argues that structuralist linguistics excluded too many important aspects of language phenomena, most importantly the *act* of speaking, that is, language as performance (Ricoeur, 1981). Analysis of texts that marginalises language as meaningful activity therefore marginalises the primary aim of language, which is to say something about something to someone, in order to *do* something. Ricoeur's hermeneutics, that is, his theory of linguistic interpretation, is consequently discourse-based because discourse is realised in 'real' time and is always about something and someone and, as a consequence, 'refers to a world which it claims to describe, to express, to represent'. (Ricoeur, 1981: 198) Discourse is also about interaction and exchange; about people, institutions, power and status; about relationships and differences. In such circumstances analysis of language becomes more than just an attempt to recover meanings: it is always interpretation, always criticism, always, as with the philosopher Martin Heidegger, a process of understanding

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'discourse as projecting a world'. Texts have no fixed meanings, no centres of signification, no routes to closure. Analysing texts, therefore, is about interpreting language as meaningful action. It is a process of guessing and construing possible meanings, possible readings: it is a 'cumulative, holistic process', never right or correct, never completed, never closed:

> ... understanding has nothing to do with an immediate grasping of a foreign psychic life or with an *emotional* identification with a meaningful intention. Understanding is entirely *mediated* by the whole of explanatory procedures which precede it and accompany it. The counterpart of this personal appropriation is not something which can be *felt*, it is the dynamic meaning released by the explanation ... its power of disclosing a world.
>
> (Ricoeur, 1981: 220)

Critical linguists argue that it is through and with language that we classify and therefore make sense of such worlds. We therefore experience the world because of language. We do not relate *directly* to the world except through a mediating system of classifications and categorisations. These classifications differ from group to group, society to society, ideology to ideology. Analysis of the classifications of language is therefore analysis of ideologies. Structuralist linguistics and 'modernist' criticism have not for the most part, been concerned with such things because they have been concerned with idealised worlds, not 'real' worlds of discourse. Roger Fowler made the point some years ago that 'contemporary linguistics cannot be absorbed into criticism without real modification'. (Fowler, 1975a: 120) That modification rests firmly on a recognition that analysis of text - literary or otherwise - needs to treat text as discourse; needs, in Saussurean terms, to be *parole*-based. The resultant, re-oriented, linguistics needs to recognise that all texts are multi-levelled, multi-layered, multi-meaninged; that these meanings are not the sole property of the speaker/writer but are constructed and produced in communicative interaction; it needs to recognise the importance of 'real' discourse with its messiness and fuzzy edges; to be concerned with language as showing and doing, and not just with language as saying; to recognise that the judgements and choices we make in producing texts and making meanings are not arbitrary, but are institutionally and therefore ideologically determined; and that analysing language is analysing the process of making meanings in discourse.

Linguistic and literary analysis requires a curiosity about the way language works in discourse, and it is this curiosity that requires an analyst not simply to describe by using a series of grammatical and linguistic labels, but to probe the language. This probing requires a quite dramatic shift of attention away from the idea that meanings are contained ***within*** the words and structures towards explaining and understanding meanings constructed by all producers of language

writers/readers, speakers/hearers. What that means in effect is recognising from the beginning that when we are faced with analysis, for whatever reason, we need, in the first instance, to engage with (and I would suggest, reject) two assumptions:

1. that there is a meaning *in* a text 'put in' by a writer which has to be 'fished out' by the reader/hearer/critic/analyst in order for the interpretive process to take place
2. that a text can be treated as self-contained, a contextless artefact, a text 'in its own right'.

Central to this rejection is the crucial notion that analysing text is an activity which is concerned with understanding *how* a text means, not with *what* a text means, (cf. Belsey, 1980; Easthope, 1983; Norris, 1982, 1984).

Analysing *what* a text means implies a position that involves finding and extracting meaning(s) from a text; it is a 'search and remove' activity. This undertaking is based on theory that states that meanings have been 'put into' the text by the writer or speaker, and that it is the job of the reader/hearer/analyst/critic to discover them. It is effectively a static operation, and has produced over many years a wide variety of *formal* objective approaches, in which the personality, beliefs, background and biases of the *reader/critic* are considered not only irrelevant, but a positive hindrance to textual interpretation.

Analysing *how* a text means involves a much more dynamic activity, whose underlying theory suggests that meanings aren't simply 'put into' a text by a writer/speaker, but are constructed by the reader/hearer. That doesn't mean that the writer/speaker has nothing to do with the text - what it means is that the only way we have of constructing a reading for a text is through our *own* socially determined language as reader/hearer. In effect, that means each time a reader reads a text, a *new* text is created. Whose text is it? The writer/speaker's or yours? That of the editor of the book or yours? That of the performer in a poetry reading/play or yours? Whose voice are you when you are reading? Yours? Or the writer's? When you are attempting to make a text coherent - to understand how it means - what criteria do you use for discarding what you don't think necessary or relevant? Criteria developed by the writer or developed by you?

George Lukács, writing in 1936 and broadly following the theories of Karl Marx, argued for a recognition that the forms of literature (for example, the novel) do not change internally, that is, they do not change as a result of some autonomous force solely within the genre, but they change as a result of political, social and economic pressures brought to bear, for one reason or another, upon the genre.

Understanding the meanings of discourse, therefore, is a question of recog-

nising social, political and economic realities. But what constitutes reality'? Broadly speal ing, a Marxist position, like the one established by Lukács, grounds social reality in a history of struggles centred upon class and systems of production, reflecting at any given moment a dialectical relationship between history and society. The capitalist society of 'modernistl' and post-modernist criticism in the west, has been founded on a base of exploitation, and as a consequence Marxist analyst of that society is effectively centred on conflict, of one form or another.

Pierre Macherey, following the Marxist position of Louis Althusser, developed a theory of reading the relationship of the literary text with a view that asserts that 'Literature "produces" ideology by writing it out.' (Forgacs, 1982: 148). In other words, this theory assumes that ideologies need a shape, a form, in which to exist. Conflict is therefore a part of the literary text, because 'literature challenges ideology by using it.' (Macherey, 1978: 133). This is a crucial point because it focuses not just on the status of literature, but also on the status of criticism. A traditional understanding of interpretation implies that a text has a coherent meaning that simply needs to be discovered by the critic. Macherey, Althusser and other contemporary critics, Marxist or not, would disagree and argue that meaning isn't located *within* the text, but is best understood in terms of its larger site of production:

> '... a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said; analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object - not that compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery, but the condition which makes the work possible, which precedes the work so absolutely that it cannot be found in the work.'
>
> (Macherey, 1978: 150)

Central to this kind of thinking, then, is the analysis of ideology; and crucial to any understanding of ideology is the role of language.

Macherey did not develop this idea to any great extent, but the work of Mikhail Bakhtin/Valentin Voloshinov did. (Bakhtin used several of his friends' names in order to publish some of his work, which might have been published or banned if published under his own.)

The work of Bakhtin/Voloshinov, mostly written in the 1920s (Bakhtin/Voloshinov, 1930, 1968, 1973, 1981) has gained prominence in the 1980s, mainly through the work of Julia Kristeva (Kristeva, 1980) and Roger (Fowler, 1981). Roger Fowler in particular, together with many others now including Gunther Kress, Bob Hodge, Terry Threadgold, Deirdre Burdon, Michel Pechêux, Pierre Bourdieu, have been concerned with developing a critical practice concerned with ideology. The theory of language established in this critical practice rejects the neat dichotomies of structuralist linguistics and liter-

ary theory and argues that the text is a site for the 'negotiation of meanings': meanings that result from a range of other texts and contexts - other 'voices'. The text is the product of *social* interaction and intertextualities; the basic unit of language is interactive, *dialogic*, 'a two-sided act' (Bakhtin, 1973: 86). The 'sign' is multi accented *(heteroglossic)*, resulting in discourse as an 'arena of struggle' (Threadgold, 1986: 23). Ideology is thus defined as 'the material embodiment of social interaction' (Forgacs, 1982: 161), with the emphasis upon discourse, dialogue (see Bakhtin, 1981), and literature as practices rather than innocent expressions of social reality. The subject is therefore a social subject constituted by material forces - ideology - rather than by some form of rational consciousness.

What this therefore means for the analysis and interpretation of literary and non-literary language is that an analyst cannot make a statement about a particular idea *in* a text. What you can do is to make a statement about a particular idea that you have constructed *for* the text. You have to use your own language in order to get to the writer's, and in so doing you can never actually get to the writer's because your own language and the institutions which have created it get in the way. You cannot escape your own language, and you cannot stop using your own language in order to construct a reading of what you might consider to be someone else's text. What you construct is your own linguistic engagement with the text - your own language, which is itself constructed and determined by social, cultural, ideological and institutional forces - what Wittgenstein referred to in his definition of language as institutional being-able-to. The American literary critic and theorist, Harold Bloom, puts it this way: 'I only *know* a text, any text, because I know a reading of it, someone else's reading, my own reading, a composite reading.' (Bloom, 1979: 8)

This is a very important argument and one that stands against the idea that literature exists for its own sake - beyond a reader's experience of it. F W Bateson presents the other side of the argument, the one more familiar to the majority of traditionally-minded critics today, in his book *Essays in Critical Dissent*:

> As the ***Mona Lisa*** exists both within and outside the various reactions to it by visitors to the Louvre, so there is an objective ***Hamlet***, behind our individual experiences of it, which enables us to say of a particular performance that it is wrong-headed or one-sided. (Bateson, 1972: 9-10)

But the question we need to ask is where is this objective ***Mona Lisa*** or ***Hamlet***? Is it the one constructed by the painter/writer? When the Louvre is closed for the night, the galleries are in darkness and no one about, is the painting on the wall still the ***Mona Lisa***, or does it require recognition as the ***Mona Lisa*** before it 'becomes' the ***Mona Lisa***? Similarly for ***Hamlet*** - for any text. Do they exist

beyond people's experiences of them? If they do, as Bateson and others would argue, where do they exist, and in what form do they exist?

As language users we tend to assume that texts are designed to mean, and as a consequence we construct coherences for a text which may well have little or nothing to do with writerly design or intention. In an extremely interesting experiment in his book *Telling How Texts Talk* (McHoul, 1982) Alec McHoul designs an exercise that offers to readers what appears to be a fourteen-line poem by Pierre Reverdy. Each line is offered cumulatively and readers are asked to comment as the 'poem' develops. The results are an interesting collection of commentaries, all of which seek to make the text work coherently. In practice, the poem is a collection of the randomly chosen first lines of fourteen separate poems. Had the readers known that, their search for making the text coherent might well have taken quite different routes to the ones they took. My position is that we can never make our critical practice writer-centred because we can never recover the writer's language. We can only work with a construction - a reading formation based on differing institutional constructions and ideologies. We can therefore only ever talk about *readings*, not *writings*.

The consequences of this position are that your language, your background, biases, ideas, beliefs, politics, education, etc *determine* your understanding. But they are not invented by you as an individual. They are socially determined by the institutions and discursive practices that constitute the social networks you are involved in. Consequently, whatever you construct as a reading of a text is what you as reader/critic have created for that text, and it is the result of critical decisions that have been developed as an integral part of your background. They do not stand innocently and separately from who you are. As analyst you are not an archeologist digging out other people's words and ideas; you are a critic actively engaged in understanding your reaction to a text which has been initially created by someone else. Much as you might want to talk about that 'someone else' you can only ever talk about your reading, your intertextuality. And no matter how appropriate you think your reading to be, there is no way that you can make that reading the 'correct one' by implying or declaring it to be the same as the writer's.

As analyst and critic you are not a nameless and faceless explicator of someone else's meaning. You are involved in explaining how texts mean for *you* and no one else. And to do that requires that you are *known*.

This is a crucial idea and needs to be developed further, because *how* a text means, and who you are, isn't theory-less. The way you construct meanings for texts depends on the way you construct theories about the world - about realities.

There isn't a single theory of the way the world works, and, just as crucially and relatedly, there isn't a single theory of the way language means. Following on from some of the ideas of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, there is no such thing as *the* single meaning, *the* correct meaning, *the* right meaning.

There are many meanings associated with many theories of reality. And theories of reality are, like theories of language, a means of classification, a way of ordering the world. Different cultures, societies and individuals classify and understand the world in different ways and this recognition needs to be a crucial part of the thinking involved in a *dynamic* textual interpretation. It is this dynamic textual interpretation which has to be the way of the future, and in the context of this seminar, the development of language teaching methodology in the nineties and beyond. As readers/critics - as people living amongst other people - we make choices about the way we view the world, the way we classify, the way we order our lives, our political positions. These decisions are critical because we have made them - even if constrained and repressed by more powerful agencies than ourselves - from a position of choice. The 'rightness' of a decision, of an act of classifying something, of an idea about the world, is relative not to some inherent correct order for the world ordained somehow in nature, but to a theory, a position, a set of ideas, institutionally created and constructed. Put simply, there is nothing inherently correct or right about anything; there are levels of appropriateness relative to particular ideas, theories and systems of classifying.

I'll develop this a little further by looking at an example of a text from Michael Halliday (1976) which at first appearance might seem to have a single 'straightforward' meaning:

THE TEACHER TAUGHT THE STUDENT ENGLISH

One of the traditional ways that linguists have of understanding how a text means is by classifying its grammatical structures according to a form of labelling that has its semantic roots in classical Greek philosophy. So the functions of the principal structures of this text might be classified as

THE TEACHER	TAUGHT	THE STUDENT	ENGLISH
[subject]	[verb]	[indirect object]	[object]

The subject of the sentence - grammatically - is the teacher, though you might consider that the subject of the activity, supposing this text is describing a 'real event', is either the student (who is subjected to the teaching) or English (which is the subject being taught). Labelling the language in this way puts the teacher into a position of power - the teacher is the subject of the activity, that is, the process of teaching. The student is an object, like English, in the control of the teacher, and is not a part of the activity, but rather a passive receiver - in an indirect way - of an object, English. The grammatical classification of the elements of this text therefore suggests that these are not neutral, objective labels, 'simply' classifying an activity, but that they are a powerful means by

which to create a world - that of an unequal power relationship in which a teacher controls the means of gaining knowledge, the knowledge itself, and the recipient of the knowledge. Neither the student nor English are an active part of the process of teaching, but are passive participants in someone else's activity. In other words, the means of classification are not formal - innocent - tools, but are a powerful way of expressing a particular reality - one that, in terms of education, and, in many ways, of the world at large, privileges unequal power relations and accords high status to certain members of society. *How* this 'simple' text means depends on you recognising that its 'formal' grammatical classification of - *subject, verb, object* is integrally connected to a philosophy of the world, and that the use of this classification system is a *critical* decision that implies that the critic accords with this world view. In other words, if you as critic/analyst use this system, you are engaging in more than an innocent, objective, analytic process: you are expressing a particular ideology from which, in the use of these labels, you cannot escape.

How this text means is therefore not 'simply' a question of what the words mean, but how their functions and connections are perceived and classified by the reader/critic. This is a crucial point to understand if you are to engage at all with this type of critical practice and interpretation.

The traditional grammatical classification is not the only classification choice open to you, though. There is nothing 'in' this text which requires you to see it in that way. Classified as follows, the text becomes a different text with new meanings, new world view

THE TEACHER	TAUGHT	THE STUDENT	ENGLISH
[actor]	[material process]	[beneficiary]	[goal]

This, Halliday suggests, can be paraphrased as 'The teacher imparted English to the student'.

Classifying 'taught' as a material process indicates that something more than the idle labelling of a word is happening here. A material process implies that there is some sort of physical - material - action involved, so that teaching might be considered as a transaction, a handing over of a commodity to a recipient. If you see that recipient as a beneficiary then you are signalling that the act of receiving has benefits, though you are not normally saying what those benefits are. At least there is no foregrounding of an indirectness in the act of receiving, as there is in the first example. With this type of labelling comes a sense that the classifying of processes and participants involves a view of the world that is concerned with the apportioning of responsibilities. Here, the responsibility is on the teacher to give the best possible English, which is the goal of the activity. The prominent feature here is therefore 'English' rather than 'the student'. And in that sense this is quite different text from the one that has subjects and objects

even though the words may look the same.

Take another look at the sentence:

THE TEACHER	TAUGHT	THE STUDENT	ENGLISH
[actor]	[material process]	[goal]	[range]

This might be paraphrased as 'The teacher instructed the student in English'.

The process is still considered to be material, but the teacher is now doing something to the student rather than to the language. The student, rather than the language being taught, is the goal, so the process involved here has more to do with the person than with the commodity. English is seen as the range, or scope, of the activity of teaching, thus specifying more precisely the concerns of the process of teaching. The action is now directed at the student, though the role is still passive inasmuchas the student isn't doing anything. The teacher is still the person controlling the activity and the student is still manipulated by the teacher and controlled by the range of the activity. Is this the 'same' text as in the first two readings?

Another classification of the sentence might run as follows:

THE TEACHER	TAUGHT	THE STUDENT	ENGLISH
[initiator]	[material process]	[actor]	[range]

Paraphrased, this might read: 'The teacher caused the student to learn English'.

The student, as actor, is now the person *doing* something so that the purpose of the teacher is to initiate a process whereby the student learns. The process is still a material process as action is involved, and 'English' is still describing the range of this action, but unlike the first three readings the student is perceived, through the classification system itself as someone who is *actively* involved in the process of teaching, rather than as a passive receiver of a commodity.

So far we have moved from a classification system that puts all the power into the hands of a teacher to one that suggests teaching to be much more of an *interactive* process. There are, of course, pedagogical, social and political consequences in a critical practice that seeks to understand how language means in this way. The labels you choose reflect the ideology you espouse. They are not, as indeed no word is, innocent of ideological consequences. The last example should indicate this quite clearly.

THE TEACHER	TAUGHT	THE STUDENT	ENGLISH
[initiator]	[mental process]	[cognisant]	[range]

Paraphrased, this might read 'The teacher enabled the student to come to know

English'.

The process is now considered to be a *mental* process, not a material action one. This signals that the student now participates more fully in the process because it is the student's cognitive faculties that are involved, rather than the physical actions of the teacher. The student is foregrounded, but is still involved interactively with a teacher who initiates the process of learning. Learning is not now seen as the passive receiving of a commodity, but as a cognitive activity involving interaction between student and teacher. This places the student in a quite different political position than in the other four readings.

There are other classifications, other readings, other ways of articulating how this text means, but the point has been made, I think. There is no single text with a single meaning. Meaning is relative to ideology, and the way we classify a text as 'working' in a particular way says a great deal about the ideologies we are practising - consciously or otherwise. Analysis of how language means is therefore analysis about how the world means, how ideas and institutions mean. What we are involved in here is therefore a critical practice that is both *political* and *historical*. The decisions you make about how you classify language are political ones that accord with the way you see, and wish others to see, the world. This political act is not something that should be swept under the carpet; it should be recognised for what it is - a crucial, necessary and inescapable part of the interpretive process, and this it seems to me is the most crucial move that has to be made in developing language teaching methodologies for the nineties - recognition of the different ideologies involved in the classification systems we choose to incorporate into the classrooms and textbooks of linguistic and literary analysis, and more importantly deciding to demonstrate these different meaning options to students.

What we need to recognise therefore is that we are, or need to be, involved in a socially and politically oriented *explanation* of language relative to a range of views of 'how the world works' in many ways, ie in an explanation of social realities and ideologies - and not simply involved, as it so often the case at the moment, in a neutral description of how the world works in one single way. (See Kuhn, 1962). This form of analysis is therefore a *critical linguistics* (see Fowler *et al*, 1979; Fowler, 1986; and cf. Steiner, 1985; Frow, 1984; Birch, 1989; Fairclough, 1989; Birch, forthcoming 1990).

The relationship of ideology and meaning is something that has influenced a great deal of work in language and literature studies over the last twenty years or so, and many of the theoretical influences have come from disciplines like philosophy, sociology and political science (see Coward and Ellis, 1977; Burton and Carlen, 1979; Silverman and Torode, 1980; Fowler and Marshall, 1985; Frow, 1986; Kress, 1985a, 1985b, 1988c. It is important to realise how the face of textual analysis has changed, and continues to change, because of a commitment to ideas and beliefs which at one time would have been considered totally inap-

propriate for 'literary' analysts. This has resulted not only in a broadening of the theoretical and philosophical interests in language and literature studies, but also in a considerable widening of the range of texts people are looking at. This has come about, for the most part, because many analysts are no longer interested in simply studying a text 'for its own sake'. The choice of text is no longer constrained by a traditional literary canon because critical linguists have an interest *beyond* the text. This move, towards a broadening spare of the sorts of texts analysts are interested in, is one that inevitably has to be made in the language and literature pedagogical practices of the future. The move is one towards a *social semiotics* which is considerably more inclusive of a much wider range of texts than is currently considered appropriate in most curricula (Hodge and Kress, 1989). This social semiotics recognises as one if its fundamental premises that all discourse is ideologically, institutionally and textually determined.

The view of language as determining, not simply reflecting, reality, is an important one, and central to much contemporary thinking about the way language and society work (see Kress and Hodge, 1979; Fowler *et al*, 1979). The theory that language is simply a means of representation - language as saying, if you like - is really a very inadequate one. Language does more than say; it does more than pass on information or reflect an already existing reality 'out there' somewhere in the world. Language is about action and interaction; it is about performance, about showing, about doing. Language is not a neutral instrument: it is biased in a thousand different ways, and those ways of course are determined by any number of differing ideologies, knowledge and power systems, and institutions. And it is the role, it seems to me, of a responsible critical linguistics - a responsible social semiotics - to develop the means of understanding and explaining the mechanics of those thousand different ways.

The main goal of this sort of thinking, and its consequent analysis - is much larger than that of simply being able to describe linguistic or stylistic structures in texts; such analysis plays a major part in understanding the nature of language, and hence in understanding people and the discursive practices they are engaged in.

The Cartesian view that we are individuals free from context is still a dominant one in many circles; it is a convenient means of maintaining classist and elitist views, of suggesting that a minority of people are more sensitive, more able to 'understand' the world than the larger mass of people. It is a view that is at the very roots of traditional literary criticism, and is something that is vital to any understanding of how certain views of how texts mean have developed, and continue to be developed, in linguistic and literary studies.

Linguistic theory claims to offer explanations of the processes of communication, but so far it has done so with scarcely a glance at 'real' interaction between people. The concentration on understanding the system of language has resulted in a marginalisation of discourse analysis, with discursive meaning

formations playing a decidedly minor role in the linguistic analysis of text. The failure of structuralist linguistics to account for how texts mean, and therefore how societies and institutions mean, has been spectacular. This is the legacy of a twentieth-century preoccupation with a scientificity that has demanded explicitness and objectivity in a world that operates, for the most part, as a denial of the explicit and objective. It is therefore a scientificity that seeks to compartmentalise and pigeon-hole the world into categories and classifications - structures and relations - that allow statements to be made about idealised worlds, not actual worlds. This is a scientific, formal convention, the convenience of which has modelled the world as something that it is not - neat, ordered and unproblematic.

One of the difficulties with treating the world as neat, ordered and unproblematic is that analysis of the texts that make up that world tends also to be neat, ordered and unproblematic. In a word, they tend to be lifeless. This is certainly the criticism that Roger Fowler made in his important introduction to a collection of essays he edited following a one-day conference held at the University of East Anglia in 1972. He writes of such analyses that they are 'distant from the interpretation; the poems become, paradoxically, meaningless when exposed to a technique which is supposed to reveal meaning'; (Fowler, 1975b: 10). He was writing, in particular, of the more formal and mechanistic analyses, and was concerned that analysis of literature should 'reconnect critical interpretation and linguistic analysis... based on the assumption that it is legitimate to take account of the reader's response' (Fowler, 1975b: 10). This approach does not advocate abandoning the techniques and insights of structuralist linguistic analysis; on the contrary, it proposes to use these techniques and insights to the full within a critical context. Nor does it suggest, as some linguistic analyses of literature had seemed to, that there is no role for any sort of literary criticism in such analyses. The question is rather 'what sort of criticism and what sort of linguistics are to be re-connected?' For Roger Fowler and others beginning to work in what came to be known as 'new stylistics', and later widened to be known as 'critical linguistics', one crucial issue was clear: structuralist linguistics and intrinsic literary criticism needed to be considerably modified if there was to be a successful interface of linguistics and literature. The key to any future success would lay with *interdisciplinary* approaches to analysis. This would mean recognising the restrictions and constraints of single disciplinary approaches to the subject, ie linguistics and literary criticism treating a literary text for their own distinct purposes. What was needed was an approach which embraced insights from other disciplines, like sociology, philosophy, history, politics and so on. Fowler wrote:

> An urgent priority for contemporary stylistics is to determine just what additional fields of knowledge are relevant to literary discourse, how they relate to the diversification of language outside of literature and, perhaps

most fascinating of all to the linguistics-inclined critic, how these systems of literary knowledge are coded in the structure of language.

(Fowler, 1975b: 122)

There are a number of very important points raised in what Fowler had to say here. Raising the issue of what additional fields of knowledge are relevant to literary discourse, also raises the crucial distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic criticism. To consider other fields of knowledge *other than* the text itself, is to advocate a move towards a more extrinsic form of criticism, and this move towards the more extrinsic is a central tenet of critical linguistics. Moreover, the use of the term 'discourse' in 'literary discourse' is not as arbitrary as it might first appear. The work of many philosophers and social scientists had widened the reference of this term to include philosophical, social, economic and ideological contexts. Discourse no longer simply signalled an alternative word for 'text'; it signalled a political commitment to widening the notion of 'literature' by incorporating various fields of knowledge involved in the making and reception of the literary text. And of course, what this means, is that literature becomes associated with other discourses, not normally considered by many critics to be in the same league as literature, and this did (and does) create difficulties for some critics who wish to maintain the distinctiveness of their work, and more importantly, to maintain strict boundaries marking out their discipline as a distinct discipline, different from someone else's. It is this intellectual protectionism which probably above all else is considered by critic linguists to be the most intransigent obstacle to interdisciplinarity, and hence more effective, analysis of language.

Also crucially important in Fowler's call for determining additional fields of knowledge is the role of language. Forms of language are not as freely chosen as we might like to think. We choose according to circumstances, and those circumstances are ideologically and socially determined. Interpretation of those texts is therefore interpretation of socially determined language, and that means being involved as analysts in understanding the processes, functions and meanings of social interaction. This, in turn, means being involved in the politics of interaction. And this involvement is what makes the linguistics *critical* because it assumes that the links amongst people and society are not arbitrary and accidental, (see Fowler ***et al***, 1979; Kress and Hodge, 1979; Kress, 1988a; Hodge, 1988). The nature of the criticism is therefore to select and deconstruct these links and to understand the patterns of meaning involved in order to understand the nature of language and society; because people categorise the world, and are categorised themselves, through language. This process of selection and deconstruction is not arbitrary either. It is informed by the insights gained from interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the world and applying those insights in a selective and critical way. This necessarily suggests to many critics, suspicious

of such approaches, that the selection is subjective, and hence unscientific, and they therefore condemn the approach. But to do this is to miss the point. It is that very process of subjectivity which gives reasons for the analysis because it operates on the principle that the *form* of a text is not the only thing that critics should be concerned with. This was a central issue in the debates that Roger Fowler had with literary critics following the publication in 1966 of his *Essays on Style and Language*, in particular the debate with F W Bateson in the journal *Essay in Criticism*. In 'Linguistics, stylistic; criticism?' (reprinted in Fowler, 1971, 32-42) which was first published in 1966, Fowler makes the point that linguistics had reached and impasse because it did not consider criticism as part of its brief for the analysis of literary texts. This, Fowler argued, resulted in a 'blind competence' which 'has produced many a fatuous or useless analysis; technical analysis without thought or sensitivity' (Fowler, 1971: 33). Mere description of texts was not sufficient because it was not critical. It was too thorough in the sense that it could 'lay bare the formal structure of the language in more detail than any critic would want' (Fowler, 1971: 38). The point about structuralist/descriptivist linguistics was that it was not selective: 'It describes everything, and all data are of equal significance' (Fowler, 1971: 39). For *critical* analysis 'one must know (or have some at least marginally positive clue) *why* one is undertaking verbal analysis: and this knowledge will inevitably direct the manner of the analysis' (Fowler, 1971: 39). Despite caveats like this, there was considerable hostility expressed by some critics towards any sort of linguistic analysis of literature, to the extent that one reviewer of Fowler's 1966 essays went so far as to say that 'linguists as a species are incapable of treating literature' (Fowler, 1971: 44). Such objections were unfounded, but indicative of the protections some non-linguists felt had to be put around themselves and their discipline. Critics of linguistic analysis of literature felt that linguists had to produce revelations about the texts which were gained from formal, 'objective', analysis of the language of the texts, in order to justify their incursions into the literary field. Such revelations weren't evident, and so the analyses were condemned. In his reply to a review by Helen Vendler of his 1966 volume of essays, Roger Fowler made it clear that his position was not that linguistics claimed to have a sensitivity about literature which literary critics did not have, but that the 'closest claim is that the consciousness, concentration and fidelity to text demanded by the act of analysis may help in working out hunches about a work, and may aid in catching effects possibly missed through laziness' (Fowler, 1971: 51). The accusation of laziness, amongst other things, was bound to provoke response because it touched on the central issue of language analysis. F W Bateson, the editor of *Essays in Criticism*, responded with a view that the problem with linguistic analysis of literature was that it *required* the analysis of language in a text. His position was that 'For the native speaker, except occasionally and superficially, this is simply not true' (Fowler, 1971: 62). In other words

native speakers of English, for example, knew all there was to know about language without needing linguistics to help them. Bateson was of the opinion that language was a separate activity to literary meaning - preliminary to understanding the style of a *literary* text, which in turn was a preliminary to the *literary* response 'in its fullest sense' (Fowler, 1971: 79). Linguistics had therefore been disqualified, as Fowler made clear in his response to Bateson, as 'a discipline of relevance to literature' (Fowler, 1971: 65). Bateson's position, of course, confuses the distinction between knowing *about* a language, and knowing a language, and it is this 'knowing about' which is a crucial part of defining the notion of critical analysis for Fowler. At the time of his debate with Bateson the 'about' was still mainly concerned with the formal structures of language, but this developed into a more detailed awareness of the social, functional and ideological meanings involved in language.

There are, as Roger Fowler and Gunther Kress make clear, 'strong and pervasive connections between linguistic structure and social structure' (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 185), to the extent that linguistic meaning is inseparable from ideology. This also applies to critical linguistics itself, and as a consequence, not only should linguistic analysis be aware of the ideologies involved in the construction and reception of discourse, it should also be aware of the theoretical and methodological assumptions which form its own practices. The structures of language cannot be separated from language use; texts are 'the linguistic part of complicated communicative interactions' (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 195) which are in turn 'implicated in social processes' (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 195). Language, they argue, is 'not just a *reflex* of social processes and structures', but contributes 'instrumentally to the consolidation of existing social structures and material conditions' (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 195-6). As Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress make clear in their most recent book, *Social Semiotics*, a theory of language 'has to be seen in the context of a theory of all sign systems as socially constituted, and treated as social practices' (Hodge and Kress, 1988). Interpretation, therefore, 'is the process of recovering the social meanings expressed in discourse by analysing the linguistic structures in the light of their interactional and wider social contexts' (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 196). As the contributors to the volume edited by Roger Fowler *et al* entitled *Language and Control* (Fowler *et al*, 1979) make clear, and in the words of Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge, 'Language is an instrument of control as well as of communication' (Kress and Hodge, 1979: 6). People can therefore be both informed and manipulated by language, and of course can inform and manipulate others (see Fairclough, 1989 and Birch, forthcoming 1990). Theories of language are therefore theories of ideology and as such are organised presentations, in one way or another, of social realities (Kress and Hodge, 1979: 15). In that respect a critical linguistic approach is not concerned with developing a theory of language which is specific to literary texts only, but attempts to theorise language as ideology

with respect to all texts, whether they are poems, Mafia underworld language or liturgical responses. As Kress makes clear 'all texts are subject to the same linguistic and social determinations, so-called literary texts no less than so-called non-literary texts' (Kress, 1988b: 127) - a shift in thinking which is characteristic of critical linguistics.

This shift in direction within critical linguistics and discourse analysis away from the privileging of literature as a high culture text needing to be treated sensitively, towards an analysis which has the potential of including any text, might suggest a levelling of all texts to a single common denominator. This would be true if the analyses were carried out without rhyme or reason, but they are not. *Why* the analysis is being carried out determines the choice of texts. The 'why', within critical linguistics at least, has tended to be politically motivated, not least with concerns of class and gender injustices. What this means, of course, is that from an intrinsic critical viewpoint, critical linguistics is concerned with matters usually considered extrinsic to both the text and to literary/linguistic analysis. But it is this very 'extrinsicity' which is, for critical linguists, the crucial focal point, because it is this that determines the 'why' of the analysis. It also, importantly suggests that critical linguistic analyses need to be *intertextual* ie aware of other texts and readings which inform the ideological processes involved (see Threadgold, 1988; Thibault, 1988; Kress, 1988a, 1988b; Birch, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990 forthcoming).

An example from Gunther Kress in a paper entitled 'The Social Values of Speech and Writing' should give a clearer idea of the analytic consequences of some of the thinking I've been discussing so far.

Central to Kress's argument in this paper is that most education systems take the written language as a standard for measuring the 'quality' of someone's spoken language, thus viewing, in his useful phrase, 'speech ... as a deformation of the norms of the writing model'. (Kress, 1979: 56) Most of us will be familiar with the sorts of judgements made about 'correct' spoken English that suppose that the grammar of any variety of spoken English is the same as the grammar of standard written English. It is not, of course, and considerable work has been done in the last twenty years or so that demonstrate quite different grammars in operation. (See in particular Halliday, 1985a, 1985b; Stubbs, 1980) For the most part the judgements that are made don't actually affect the course of most people's lives. But there are situations in which value judgements are made by people in control of others based on the fallacy that spoken language should somehow approximate written language, and people's lives can be affected as a result. Gunther Kress takes the example of a transcript made by a speech therapist of a spoken text produced by an eight-year-old boy. He was given a picture book and asked to recount the story he saw there:

That's a bus and driving down the road and the drive round road and try and mend them is stop try stop running away try catch him and can't. He see engine him follow him Make funny funny funny er pictures and he run away and go in tunnel and his bus go away.

Kress's initial point - and it's one we've already come across in this chapter - is that this text is not a neutral, objective reflection of reality. The production of this text requires a therapist to hold, consciously or not, a theory of language that enables the therapist to shape the text according to a set of principles underlying how the therapist believes language works. The consequences of this transcript are that they represent the boy as someone without any coherent command of syntax: sentence structure is 'poor', tense and time are confused, gender and number are mixed up. The sorts of decisions that would be made by a therapist about the child's command of English are likely to be made using these observations as a base for developing a programme of 'corrective' action. This, after all, is what speech therapists presume their job to be. The point that Kress makes is that decisions about a child's spoken language are likely to be made using notions of what constitutes 'good' grammar and coherent English in written English. So, for example, conceptually, the sentence is considered to be the basic unit of thought, because this is how it is described in written English. Consequently, judgements can easily be made about the child's conceptual abilities, based on a perception that he or she cannot make sentences. In practice, the sentence is one of the least useful ways of describing how spoken language is structured, but if you use it as a judgemental base the next step is to argue that the child is unable to make logical connections between sentences. Similarly, because a sentence is defined by grammarians in terms of subject/actor, verb and object/acted-upon, decisions could be made about the child's undeveloped notions of causality because of the absence of grammatically expressed sentence constituents. Continuing in this way a therapist is likely to make judgements about the child's poor understanding of the notion of time because of problems with time and tense in the text. In other words, judgements about how the text means are made as if it were written language, and these linguistic judgements are used as a base to make value judgements about the child's conceptual abilities. The child can therefore be categorised as having mental problems which, in practice, are effectively textually determined by the way a therapist decides to transcribe the data.

But Kress suggests that a transcript of the text based on information units of speech rather than on a sentence-based writing model might look something like this (underlining indicates major pitch movement and // marks of major information units):

//I saw a bus// a ... driving down the road// and it drive s there (that)// round the (na) road// an try and mend them// is s stop p// try// that were running away// and try to (a) catch him// and can't// He see an engine// it follow him// make funny funny a funny a pictures// and he ran away// and he go in tunnel// and his bus go away.

What this transcript immediately does is to treat the grammar of spoken English in a radically different way from the grammar of written English. Kress also includes information from the tape that was 'cleaned up' in the therapist's version. Importantly, the passage is marked by clearly defined information units, consisting for the most part of a single clause. This is expected behaviour for spoken English. The child clearly has a good grasp of the basic unit of speech and an ability to order these units in complex ways. As is common in speech, much is 'understood', for example, ellipsed subjects, but more importantly, I think, this transcript demonstrates clearly that the child has a good understanding of direction and movement in storytelling, because the placing of intonation focus falls on the major components of the story: bus, road, drive, etc. Kress also makes the crucial point that the therapist's transcript takes no account of the child's dialect. It is in fact a variety of English from East Anglia in the UK (Norwich English). In this dialect verbs tend not to be marked for the third person or for past and present tense (see Trudgill, 1974). But Kress's point, and it is an important one, is that if you don't happen to be a speaker of Norwich English, and therefore don't know these features, the decisions you make about the speaker's language, and possibly their intellectual capacities, are influenced by a quite different model and theory of language. Consequently, you can construct, textually, a quite different picture of a child's linguistic and intellectual abilities or problems. The version from the therapist shows a child barely able to express himself through language; the other, by Kress, shows a competent eight-year old speaker of Norwich English. Kress suggests, therefore, that an interpretation of the child's discourse, based on his transcript, would be something like this:

I saw a bus, driving down the road; and it drives there, round the road, and try and mend them. It has stopped, try ... (inaudible) running away, and try to catch him and can't. He see an engine, it follow him, make funny, funny, funny pictures. And he ran away and he go in tunnel, and his bus go away.

This is a text less likely to result in value judgements determining the child to be less capable than he really is. How this text means is quite different from how the therapist's text means. Quite different realities are presented with quite different ideological bases for modelling language and the world.

It is these different realities which need to be recognised and incorporated

into the theory and classroom practices of language teaching, both now, and in the nineties, and, this, I would suggest, should be a major direction for linguists and educationists to be moving in.

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